



The Pelican Post

Weeks Bay Reserve Foundation Newsletter
Fall 2003

Fourth Annual Photo Contest Yields Outstanding Images

There was some hand wringing by judges who had the honor of reviewing the entries in the Fourth Annual Alabama Gulf Coast Estuaries and Watersheds Nature Photography Contest, sponsored by the Weeks Bay Reserve and Foundation in July. Participants of all ages from across the Gulf Coast entered photos in either the Open or Junior Divisions for flora, fauna and habitats, which yielded some striking results. They will be honored with a reception later this summer (more, p3).



Junior Division - Habitat - First Place
Casey Rasinen of Gulf Shores
Pickerelweed and Eastern Black Swallowtail



Junior Division - Fauna - First Place
Jared Peyton of Slidell, LA
Sandwich Terns

Reserve Foundation Reaches New Milestone with First Ever Executive Director

As mentioned in the last issue of *The Pelican Post* under the category of "breaking news," the Foundation hired **Walter Ernest IV** as its first ever Executive Director, effective June 1. No doubt, many have already met Walter, either in his considerable conservation activities in both Baldwin and Mobile Counties prior to his joining the Foundation, or since. For those who haven't yet had this opportunity, the Editor of *The Pelican Post* sat down with Walter for some questions and answers in a get-to-know session:

Q: There has never been an Executive Director for the Reserve Foundation before. Why now?

A: The Reserve Foundation has come so far and functioned so well in its brief history since 1990 based on the extraordinarily hard work of its Board of Directors and volunteers. Because of the solid foundation built by them, there is now so much opportunity for the Reserve to continue growing and working on its objectives. The Board realized that our opportunities now outweigh the time the Board and volunteers, alone, have to give, and determined that to meet our objectives, a full-time director was necessary to work with them. This is an exciting milestone for the Foundation and I am so proud to be a part of it.

[Please see **Walter** Page 4]



New Foundation Executive Director Walter Ernest spoke to the monthly meeting of the Mobile Bay National Estuary Program's Citizen Advisory Committee in June at the Blue Gill Restaurant on the Causeway.

NEWS OF NOTE



Cathy Pembroke Joins Reserve as New Office and Reception Manager

Beginning July 7, visitors and callers to the Reserve have been greeted with a fresh, new face and voice in **Cathy Pembroke**, who has joined us as our new office and reception manager. Cathy



comes to us with a long history and experience in administration, both with government and private organizations in Mississippi and Alabama. "My very first job was with the state of Mississippi, and I'm hoping my last will be for the state of Alabama!" Cathy said upon taking her new position with the Reserve. The mother of three grown children and four grandchildren who all live in Coastal Alabama, Cathy moved from Mobile to Daphne in February of last year. She says she has always enjoyed nature and taking walks in the woods and looks forward to the contribution she will make at the Reserve, where you can find her from 8am - 5pm, Monday through Friday.

Watershed Project Adds New Members to Citizens Advisory Committee

Davis Findley and **Miriam Boutwell** were recently elected as members of the Weeks Bay Watershed Project Citizens Advisory Committee, adding significantly to this talented pool of volunteer citizens who live, work or have interests in the Weeks Bay watershed. Miriam is a planner for the City of Foley and in that capacity has worked for many months with the Weeks Bay Watershed Project and the newly established projects in Wolf Bay and on Bon Secour River. As development rapidly

proceeds westward down US 98 from Foley, Miriam will be a great help in activities to promote watershed protection. Davis is employed in the permitting section of the Mobile Branch, US Army Corps of Engineers. Since the Committee reviews many permit requests for construction, wetland fills and other actions occurring in the watershed, Davis will bring great insight from his profession to the Committee. The Citizens Advisory Committee of the Weeks Bay Watershed Project has remained an active force for the protection and restoration of the streams and rivers throughout the watershed and Weeks Bay. The Committee supports events such as the Weeks Bay Area River Cleanup and many workshops. Miriam is already on the job as she and **Mike Shelton**, Watershed Project Coordinator, recently attended the Montgomery Water Fest on a fact-finding mission. The Watershed Project is doing its part to try to bring a festival of this type to Baldwin County. The Fest reaches out to fourth grade students with information on watersheds, water quality and drinking water protection. Students participate in fun activities that raise their awareness of human impacts on groundwater, a topic particularly important in Baldwin County, since all drinking water comes from underground sources. Mike and Miriam are currently working to bring together local citizens, businesses, municipalities and volunteer groups to make the Water Fest a reality.

New Exhibits Near Completion at Interpretive Center

During the summer, renovation and installation of new exhibits at the Interpretive Center continued in their final phase, courtesy of Auburn University staff and students from the Department of Industrial Design. The "Live Animal Room" has a new facelift, with a rich, cypress wood façade covering all but the glass of the aquariums and terrariums. Cypress was used to dress up the touch tank, fiddler crab, and beehive exhibits, as well.

"It has been a productive 1½ years of hard work by the University classes and the staff at the Reserve," said Interpretive Coordinator **Bob McCormack**. "It's been a long time coming, and we're finally seeing the fruit of everyone's labor." The Reserve is planning an Exhibit Opening Ceremony on Friday, September 26th. Contact the Reserve for more details.



Updated exhibits at Interpretive Center

National Coastal Cleanup Set for Annual Event

The National Coastal Cleanup is set for its annual scouring of our shores on Saturday, September 20th, 8am - 12pm. A free lunch and T-shirts will be provided to all participating volunteers. As in years past, volunteers should meet at the Weeks Bay Marina, under the US 98 bridge, to receive bags, data forms, and other necessary supplies before heading out. Trash is to be brought back to the Marina to be weighed and data forms will also be collected there. Contact Bob McCormack or Mike Shelton at the Reserve for more information.



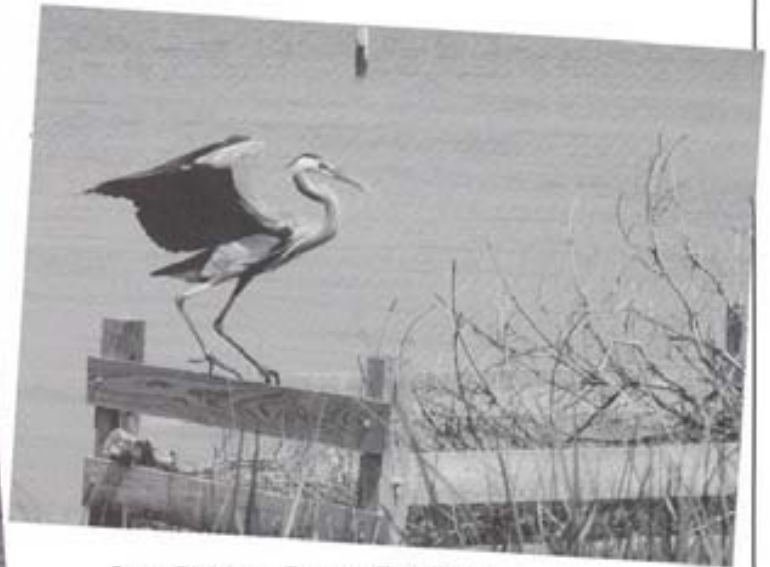
Volunteers at last year's Coastal Cleanup load up.

Fourth Annual Photo Contest Showcases Talent of Gulf Coast Residents

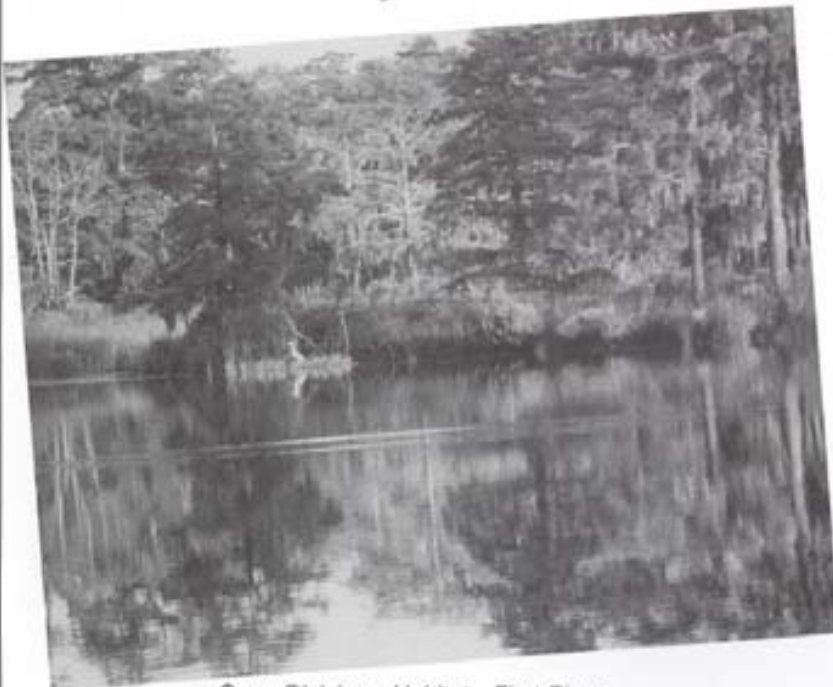
Below are additional examples of the winning entries in the annual photo contest sponsored by the Weeks Bay Reserve and Foundation. Since space does not allow us to print all these extraordinary photos in *The Pelican Post*, we encourage you to visit our website at www.weeksbay.org



Open Division - Flora - First Place
Cathy Rasinen of Gulf Shores
Southern Magnolia Flower



Open Division - Fauna - First Place
William Rawson of Mobile
Great Blue Heron



Open Division - Habitat - First Place
Yvonne Leigh of Fairhope
Fish River



Junior Division - Flora - First Place
Jared Peyton of Slidell, LA
White Topped Pitcher Plant Flower

[Walter, continued from Page 1]

Q: What do you see as your key role with the Foundation?

A: I see this role as a big responsibility. As a 501 (c) (3) nonprofit, the Foundation's mission is the protection of our natural resources, serving as a supporter of the work of the Reserve. The Reserve is dedicated primarily to research and education, so they need friends like the Foundation to support them in their endeavors. One of the most important things I'll be doing is to help maintain a strong communication link between the Foundation and the Reserve. Under this umbrella there are quite a number of areas in which I will be working. These include education, public outreach, raising funds and in-kind donations, developing and growing our membership, and developing and expanding our water quality program. I'll also be looking after the Foundation properties and searching for new ones of value to the Reserve. These include lands that could be developed, but aren't really suitable for development. Baldwin County remains one of the fastest growing counties in the state, so our work at the Foundation is more important every day to protecting our water quality and preserving it for future generations.

Q: What kind of activities have you been involved in since joining the Foundation?

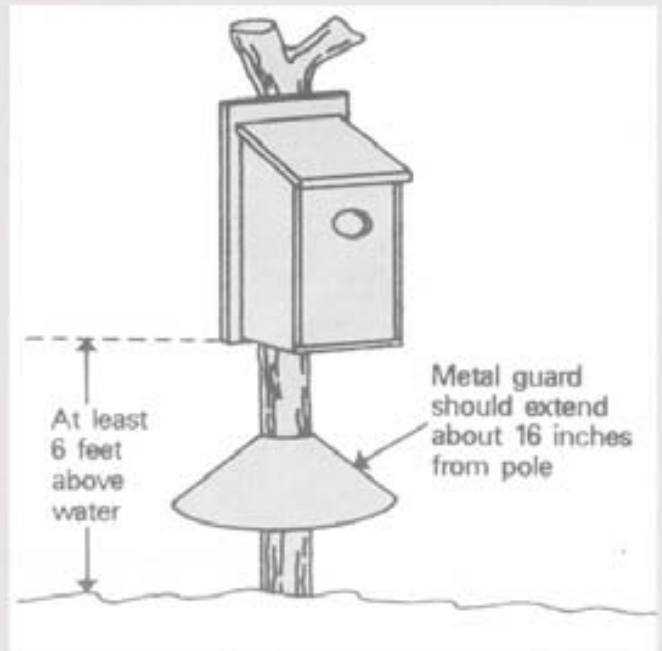
A: I've pretty much dipped my toe into all the areas mentioned above, but one area that I'm excited about is what we've already been able to accomplish in the area of habitat restoration on Foundation properties. One of our goals is to help enhance the biological function of these properties. Since my arrival here, I've been able to help implement the installation of Wood Duck boxes on Foundation properties, modeled after a successful program from my days at Mobile County Wildlife and Conservation (see related story, at right). We partnered with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to build and install Wood Duck boxes to enhance the habitat for this species and attract it to our properties. I think habitat restoration activities are among the most exciting because they capture the attention and imagination of our members and the public. They are often a very visible way to show the work of the Reserve and Foundation, and it is these type activities that can build our forces and capabilities.

Q: What is your vision for the future of the Foundation?

A: Firstly, I'd like to help increase our membership from the current 650 to 1000 members. We'd like to purchase and protect additional properties in our watershed. One of those ways is to further explore conservation easements that provide tax incentives to private property owners in exchange for their implementation of specific activities for conserving and protecting their property. I'd like to see us explore those options more fully for our readers in a future edition of *The Pelican Post*. As mentioned before, I'd like to help develop an even stronger relationship with the Reserve. Importantly, I see us expanding our partnership opportunities between government, profit and non-profit entities. I believe, through my experience, that partnerships can accomplish almost any goal in a faster and much more efficient fashion. The Roads-to-Reefs and Wood

Duck box programs would have never been as successful as they have been without partnership building. For instance, I'd like to see us develop Osprey nesting platforms to develop habitat for this species, and we'll be looking for partners, supporters, and funders, such as the Mobile Bay National Estuary Program and the area watershed groups.

*Editor's Note: Walter Ernest may be contacted at the Foundation offices at P.O. Box 731, Fairhope, Alabama, 36533, 251/990-5004, or wernest@weeksbay.org. Look for a future column from him in the quarterly issue of *The Pelican Post*.*



Foundation Enters Partnership for Wood Duck Habitat Restoration on Properties

The Weeks Bay Reserve Foundation, in a partnership with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, has begun erecting Wood Duck nest boxes on Foundation properties at the Safe Harbor RV Park, the Harris and Worcester tracts.

Wood Ducks rely on tree cavities to nest their eggs. Since the ducks are unable to excavate their own cavities, they must depend on woodpeckers and squirrels to create suitable nesting spots. With older cavity-rich trees becoming harder and harder to find, natural cavities are scarce.

Artificial nest boxes are a good alternative to natural nest boxes, and Wood Ducks readily adapt to them. However, they must be carefully constructed according to a number of detailed parameters related to: proximity to water, height, flooding, predators, wood type and nesting material.

Those not wishing to construct their own nest boxes and predator guards can participate in the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Partners for Wildlife Wood Duck Nest Box Cooperative Agreement for a fee of \$25. This is a partnership of the Mobile County Wildlife and Conservation Association and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, which, to date, has erected over 650 Wood Duck nest boxes in the Mobile Tensaw Delta, and will supply all the materials necessary for building a successful box. Contact **Randy Roach**, Senior Field Biologist with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Daphne office at 251/441-5181 for further information.

Volunteer Spotlight — Fred Jordan

During his first visit to the Weeks Bay Reserve, soon after moving to Fairhope in 1999, **Fred Jordan** says, "I decided then that I wanted to be part of the Reserve. I want to learn about our native plants and animals, and help in any way I can to enhance public appreciation of our wonderful natural heritage here in Baldwin County."

Fred and his wife **Barbara** came to Fairhope from Birmingham three years after he retired from his position as a civil engineer with Metcalf & Eddy, Inc. in Saudi Arabia. Like so many of our treasured volunteers, Fred has an impressive background and brings wonderful skills to his volunteer activities. After receiving his degree in civil engineering from Auburn, Fred spent 35 years with the Corps of Engineers, where he supervised major projects, including the construction of locks, dams, and navigable channels throughout the Southeastern United States. Throughout his career, Fred has always made time to volunteer. In many of the small towns where he lived, he designed ball parks. Then, with the help of other volunteers, spent many of his Saturdays actually constructing them, complete with bleachers!

Sailing, gardening, and fishing are some of Fred's favorite leisure-time activities. "I have always been curious, and I enjoy learning new things," he says. "I love the out-of-doors — to just breathe



Fred Jordan, with Weeks Bay Volunteer Coordinator Maureen Nation, at the entrance to the boardwalk at the Interpretive Center.

the air, and to watch things grow. That's what I like best about Weeks Bay Reserve. The boardwalks and the nature trails make the natural world easily accessible to the public. The staff does a tremendous job of explaining to our visitors the value of the fascinating things that surround us here in South Alabama. I am honored to be a part of that effort."

The Jordans have two sons and three grandchildren, so we are thankful that Fred is willing to take time away from his family and other interests to volunteer at the Weeks Bay Reserve. Although he has been involved in many

activities at the Reserve, a few of his favorites are the annual Coastal and River Cleanups, and Kid's Fishing Fun Day. Fred is a regular member of the "fire crew" when controlled burns are conducted in the pitcher plant bog, and is currently working with **Eric Brunden** in a long-term, physically demanding, habitat restoration project.

We are so pleased that Fred happened to stop by the Reserve back in 1999. Since that time, he has been one of our most reliable volunteers, and we thank him for sharing his skills and valuable time with us!

March - June 2003

THE WEEKS BAY RESERVE FOUNDATION THANKS OUR NEW AND RENEWING MEMBERS AND DONORS

Louis Braswell
Grey & Mary Cane
Paul Dirkes
Walter Ernest, IV
Exxon Mobil

Jeanne G. Frederick
Allison & George Graves
Mary Jane Inge
Mobile Botanical Gardens
Mary A. Mullins

Patmaire & Andrew Nedelka
Fletcher Pittman
Mike Rodgers
Mildred A. Stewart
Donald & Alleane Taebel

The Weeks Bay Reserve Foundation is a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization. Donations to the Foundation are tax deductible. In addition to membership dues and cash donations, other gifts range from stocks and bonds to land, equipment and professional services.

CALENDAR

The Weeks Bay Reserve Interpretive Center is open to the public Monday – Saturday 9am-5pm, and Sunday 1pm-5pm. The Interpretive Center is located at 11300 US 98 just west of the Fish River Bridge. For more information call the Reserve at 251-928-9792, or facsimile 251-928-1792.

SEPTEMBER

Juvenile gray snapper (*Lutjanus griseus*) are fairly common in submerged aquatic vegetation in northern Gulf Coast estuaries.

1 Holiday. The Interpretive Center will be **closed**. All trails and boardwalks will remain open for your walking and sightseeing pleasure.

9 Citizens Advisory Committee of the Weeks Bay Watershed Project meeting, 6pm at the Reserve.

9 Guest Lecture Series. "State Lands Division Activities" presented by Director **Jim Griggs**, Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, 7:30 pm, Faulkner State Community College Fairhope Campus, Centennial Hall. Bring a friend.

20 **17th Annual Alabama Coastal Cleanup**, in conjunction with International Coastal Cleanup, 8am-12noon. Check-in and registration at the Weeks Bay Marina, Hwy 98 under the bridge. Free lunch and T-shirts to all Cleanup volunteers. Please bring all trash to the Marina to be weighed. Contact **Bob McCormack** or **Mike Shelton** at the Reserve for more information.

20 Field trip to the 2,734-acre Forever Wild Grand Bay Savanna Tract to observe carnivorous plants, wildflowers and birds. If you are coming from Baldwin County, meet in the ADCNR Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries office parking lot on the Causeway at 8 am. If you are coming from Mobile County, meet at the Chevron Station at Exit 4 off I-10 at 8:30 am. ADCNR's **Keith Gauldin** will be our guide. Bring a friend.

23 Autumn begins.

25 Alabama's Forever Wild Land Trust Board will meet at the Gatra L. Wehle Nature Center at Blakeley State Park at 10 am. For more information, call ADCNR State Lands Division Office 334-242-3484. Bring a friend.

25-26 "Estuary Live!" interactive educational program via live satellite feeds from different National Estuarine Research Reserves. Weeks Bay Auditorium, begins 8am. Contact **Margaret Sedlecky** at the Reserve.

26 Opening Ceremony for Interpretive Center's New Exhibits. Members of the Weeks Bay Reserve Foundation, Advisory Committee, Citizens Advisory Committee, and Invited Guests. Contact **Bob McCormack** at the Reserve for details.

OCTOBER

Slow moving, lazy acting juvenile planehead filefish (*Monacanthus hispidus*) are seeking protection around cabbagehead jellyfish (*Stomolophus meleagris*) in northern Gulf Coast estuaries.

7 Citizens Advisory Committee of the Weeks Bay Watershed Project meeting, 6pm at the Reserve.

10-12 Weeks Bay Volunteers' Annual Native Plant Sale. Contact **Maureen Nation** at the Reserve.

13 Holiday. The Interpretive Center will be **closed**. All trails and boardwalks will remain open for your walking and sightseeing pleasure.

14 Guest Lecture Series. "Update on Dauphin Island Bird Sanctuaries and the Alabama Coastal Birding Trail" presented by **Dr. John Porter**, 7:30 pm, Government Street Baptist Church in Mobile. Bring a friend.

18 Field trip to Dauphin Island Bird Sanctuaries to observe the fall migration of neo-tropical birds. Meet at Shell Mound Park at 9 am. Bring a friend.

24-30 National Estuarine Research Reserve Annual Conference, Charleston, SC. Some of the Weeks Bay staff will be out of the office during this week.

26 Standard Time begins; set clocks back one hour.

NOVEMBER

Massive schools of adult striped mullet (*Mugil cephalus*) are moving out of estuaries into the northern Gulf to spawn.

4 Citizens Advisory Committee of the Weeks Bay Watershed Project meeting, 6pm at the Reserve.

11 Holiday. The Interpretive Center will be **closed**. All trails and boardwalks will remain open for your walking and sightseeing pleasure.

11 Guest Lecture Series. "Comprehensive Plan for the Baldwin County Park System" presented by Commissioner **David Ed Bishop**, 7:30 pm, Faulkner State Community College Fairhope Campus, Centennial Hall. Bring a friend.

14-16 Alabama Chapter Sierra Club Annual Meeting at Camp Beckwith, with a Saturday event at Weeks Bay Reserve. Contact Meeting Chair **Dick Short** at 800/475-2243 for details.

22 Field trip to the Mobile Tensaw River Delta to observe waterfowl, wildlife, and bottomland hardwood wetlands aboard The Delta Explorer. Meet at the dock at Blakeley State Park at 8:30 am. There will be a \$1.50 per person fee to enter the park and a \$17.00 per person fee for the boat. After the tour there will be a bring-your-own picnic lunch at the park and a tour of the Gatra L. Wehle Nature Center. Limit 50 people. For reservations call **Tammy Christian** 251-438-3060. Bring a friend.

27 Thanksgiving Day. The Interpretive Center will be **closed**. All trails and boardwalks will remain open for your walking and sightseeing pleasure.

Don't forget to visit our website
@ www.weeksbay.org



Nature's Calendar
by John Borom

The Anhinga (*Anhinga anhinga*) is one of our most bizarre birds. The genus, species, and common name are all derived from anhinga, a native South American name for "water turkey." This species swims with the body totally submerged, and just the neck and head above water. This swimming style has earned the Anhinga a common name of "snake bird."

It is a large, dark waterbird with a long, loosely jointed tail, a very long, thin neck, and a long pointed bill. Adult males are black with a green iridescence, considerable silvery white on the upper wings and back, and the end of the tail is edged with white. Adult females are similar, but browner on the head and neck.

A special adaptation of the eighth and ninth cervical vertebrae allows an Anhinga to retract its long neck into an S-shape and then thrust it forward like a spear. The sharp, straight bill has internal barbs directed inward, so that it can hold a fish easily. After securing its prey, the Anhinga usually surfaces, jerks it off its bill, tosses it into the air, and catches it head first to make swallowing easier. Although not a particularly fast swimmer, it is an effective aquatic predator, relying on its quick neck and sharp bill.

Anhinga plumage becomes very wet when they swim, but not because their feathers lack waterproofing oils; rather, the microscopic structure of the feathers lets water into tiny spaces inside them. The resulting



This photograph of Anhinga chicks was taken in the Mobile Tensaw River Delta on April 26, 2003.

loss of buoyancy

helps them submerge and forage. This feature, however, causes the bird to lose heat quickly, and hinders flight. When not fishing, Anhingas often crawl from the water and then up to a high perch and spread out their wings in order to dry out the plumage and absorb heat from the sun to help maintain body temperature.

Anhingas probably reach sexual maturity around two years of age. They are monogamous and pairs may reuse nests from year-to-year. The male begins courtship by soaring and gliding, followed by marking a possible nest location with sticks. Then the male performs behavioral displays to attract the female. Once paired, the male gathers nesting material while the female builds the nest by weaving sticks together and padding it with live twigs and green leaves. The nest is usually on a low limb of a cypress tree overhanging water. The two-to-five bluish white eggs are laid in the period from April through June. The parents share in incubating the eggs for 25 to 30 days. The young on hatching are naked and helpless and quite reptile-like in appearance. The chicks eventually grow a white down on their belly side and a dark down on their back side. At first, the parents feed the chicks by dripping fluid and regurgitated material from partially digested fish down their throats. As the chicks age, they shove their heads down the parents' beaks to get this food material. The chicks remain in the nest approximately three weeks and then are able to drop in the water and swim away if threatened. When things appear safe, they climb out of the water and back into the nest. At the end of three weeks, they are able to climb out of the nest to a branch, and fledge in approximately six weeks. They stay with their parents for several more weeks before becoming independent.

17th Annual National Coastal Clean Up Weeks Bay Marina Saturday, September 20, 2003

WHEN: 8am-12pm, Saturday September 20

WHERE: Register at Tent at Weeks Bay Marina parking lot by Lulu's Sunset Grill under Fish River bridge.

WEAR: Old clothes & shoes, hat, sunscreen

WHAT TO DO: Register at Marina first, we will supply you with necessary data form, bags, gloves, and a sile to clean if you need one. We also encourage boaters to participate !

FOOD: We will be providing a free lunch to all who volunteer to keep our environment clean and healthy !

INFO: Bob or Mike at Reserve, 928-9792

Reddish Egret by John Borom

The Reddish Egret (*Egretta rufescens*) is primarily a bird of saltwater flats and lagoons and is rarely found far from the coast. It is an uncommon, stout, medium-size heron with both dark and white color phases: In the dark phase, it has a gray body with a rust-colored head and back. In the white phase, the bird is totally white. In the adult, the long, pointed bill is pink-based with a black tip. The legs are cobalt, and the plumes on the head and thick neck give the bird a shaggy appearance. This is the beautiful bird featured on the cover of *The Alabama Coastal Birding Trail* brochure.

Reddish Egrets are extremely active feeders, using spread wings and rapid steps to secure their marine prey. By foraging with the wings extended over the water, the birds create pools of shadow through which they can more easily spot their prey. This is the only species of North American heron that uses this feeding method.

The Reddish Egret breeds in scattered rookeries along the Gulf Coast. Breeding can occur from December, in the south, through June at northern locations. This kind of scattered breeding distribution frequently indicates a species in decline.

Apparently still suffering the effects of century-past plume hunting, the Reddish Egret is Alabama's least common heron. Describing the species in 1832, **John James Audubon** made the following remarks in *Birds of America*. "I was told that, although still plentiful in the Floridas, this species was much more so when the Keys were first settled. I was present when a person killed twenty-eight in succession in about an hour, the poor birds hovering above their island in dismay, and unaware of the destructive power of their enemy." In the early 1900's, most populations of Reddish Egrets were virtually exterminated by plume hunters. Protection from plume hunters has helped re-establish and stabilize populations.

While no longer hunted for its beautiful feathers, the species remains vulnerable due to development throughout its coastal habitat. The Reddish Egret is included on the Audubon/Partners in Flight Watch List. The great sadness is that due to the press of growth, expansion and development, future generations of bird and nature lovers may never see this lovely creature dancing in the shallows.



This photograph of the Reddish Egret was taken near the Dauphin Island Airport on April 19, 2003.

Annual Reserve Workshop Addresses Stormwater Issues

Stormwater related pollution is the largest impact on the quality of Alabama's precious water resources. The economic benefits of clean water to the recreational and commercial industries that depend on it are clear, mandating that all citizens and communities promote the reduction of runoff contamination.

It is with this sense of urgency that agency and municipal officials, consultants and private citizens gathered at the Weeks Bay Reserve June 24-26, 2003 to learn innovative solutions to stormwater pollution. The 2003 Nonpoint Source Pollution and Watersheds Workshop convened for the tenth year under sponsorship of the Weeks Bay Watershed Project; the Weeks Bay Reserve; Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (ADCNR), State Lands Division, Coastal Section; and the Alabama Department of Environmental Management (ADEM). The Workshop attracted participants from Shelby, Tuscaloosa, Mobile and Baldwin Counties, as well as the Cities of New Brockton, Attalla, Daphne and Orange Beach. In addition, state agencies from both Alabama and Mississippi, and private industry were represented.

Day One of the Workshop dealt with watershed basics. Presenters included **Eve Brantley**, Alabama Cooperative Extensive Service's Nonpoint Source Pollution Program; **Bob McCormack** and **Sarah Johnston**, Weeks Bay Reserve; and **Steve Foster** and **Patti Hurley** of the ADEM Office of Education and Outreach (OEO). **Scott Phipps** of the Weeks Bay Reserve also provided upstate participants with techniques to manage lake water quality and protect the waterbody from runoff.

The remainder of the workshop was dominated by seminars on the many innovative tools for watershed protection that can be used by any community in Alabama. Those presenting in this area included (again) Patti Hurley and Steve Foster, **Mike Shelton**, Weeks Bay Watershed Project Coordinator; **Margaret Sedlecky**, Weeks Bay Reserve Education Coordinator; and **Melissa Pringle**, Eco-Systems, Inc.

One of the Workshops' many highlights was the presentation given by **Chad Christian** and **Joe Robinson**, City of Tuscaloosa. Chad, Joe and **Bennett Bearden**, City Attorney, had attended the 2002 workshop and, armed with information and resources gleaned there, were able to put together a successful combination of ordinances and outreach programs making Tuscaloosa a model community in addressing stormwater pollution.

The Workshop wrapup included presentations on statewide and coastal programs that reduce runoff pollution. Participants heard from **Hank Burch**, ADCNR, Coastal Section and **Jody Scanlan**, Auburn University Marine Extension and Research Center. Patti Hurley completed the session with a summary of ADEM OEO outreach programs.

Once again, the annual Watershed Workshop armed participants with the knowledge and resources to tackle these pressing needs in their own communities. For more information, contact Mike Shelton at the Reserve.

Research Spotlight – Kristy Pisani



The Reserve staff is pleased to announce our newest recipient of the National Estuarine Research Reserve (NERR) System's Graduate Research Fellowship. **Kristy A. Pisani** is a graduate student in the Environmental Analysis and Management Master's Thesis program at Troy State University in Troy, Alabama. Her advisor at Troy State, **Dr. Stephen C. Landers**, has been active in protozoological research at

Dauphin Island and at the Weeks Bay NERR for the past several years. Kristy's broad research interests lie in the areas of water quality, watershed management and the effects of environmental change on organisms within the ecosystem. Her research is entitled: "Salinity tolerance in the protozoan *Hyalophysa chattoni*, an external symbiont of grass shrimp." Grass shrimp (*Palaemonetes pugio*) are tolerant of a wide range of salinity from freshwater to marine waters. Weeks Bay grass shrimp are naturally infested with *Hyalophysa* and provide an ideal population of hosts for salinity tolerance experiments. Kristy's research will provide an important contribution to our knowledge of the biodiversity in Weeks Bay and the physiology of organisms that are adapted to the dynamic physical conditions of estuaries. Kristy is funded for one year and will be a frequent visitor to the Reserve to complete her research. While she is here, the Reserve Staff hopes to benefit from her knowledge and abilities in the area of water quality and watershed function.

2003 Fall Film Series

September

- 3 A Celebration of Birds - Nature
- 10 Adventures in Birdwatching I - Janson
- 17 Adventures in Birdwatching II - Janson
- 24 Adventures in Birdwatching III - Janson

October

- 1 The Life of Mammals I - BBC
- 8 The Life of Mammals II - BBC
- 15 The Life of Mammals III - BBC
- 22 The Life of Mammals IV - BBC
- 29 A Conversation with Koko - Nature

November

- 5 The Ultimate Guide Sharks - Discovery
- 12 Shark Encounters - National Geographic

Each session will be held on Wednesday at 10am, and will last 50 minutes. There is no charge and refreshments will be provided.



Faulkner State Community College
Centennial Hall - Giddens Auditorium
440 Fairhope Avenue, Fairhope AL 36532
Phone: 251-990-0420
<http://www.faulknerstate.edu/meer>

TENTH ANNUAL WEEKS BAY NATIVE PLANT SALE!

FRI, SAT & SUN
OCTOBER 10, 11, 12

SAFE HARBOR R.V. PARK
ACROSS U. S. HIGHWAY 98
FROM WEEKS BAY RESERVE

- BUTTERFLY PLANTS
- HUMMINGBIRD PLANTS
- PERENNIALS
- SHRUBS
- TREES
- WETLAND PLANTS
- DUNE PLANTS



From The Sense of Wonder © 1965 by Rachel Carson

A child's world is fresh and new and beautiful, full of wonder and excitement. It is our misfortune that, for most of us, that clear-eyed vision, that true instinct for what is beautiful and awe-inspiring, is dimmed and even lost before we reach adulthood. If I had influence with the good fairy who is supposed to preside over the christening of all children, I should ask that her gift to each child in the world be a sense of wonder so indestructible that it would last throughout life, as an unfailing antidote against the boredom and disenchantments of later years, the sterile preoccupation with things that are artificial, the alienation from the sources of our strength.

What is the value of preserving and strengthening this sense of awe and wonder, this recognition of something beyond the boundaries of human existence? Is the exploration of the natural world just a pleasant way to pass the golden hours of childhood or is there something deeper?

I am sure there is something much deeper, something lasting and significant. Those who dwell, as scientists or laymen, among the beauties and mysteries of the earth are never alone or weary of life. Whatever the vexations or concerns of their personal lives, their thoughts can find paths that lead to inner contentment and to renewed excitement in living. Those who contemplate the beauty of the earth find reserves of strength that will endure as long as life lasts. There is symbolic as well as actual beauty in the migration of the birds, the ebb and flow of the tides, the folded bud ready for the spring. There is something infinitely healing in the repeated refrains of nature—the assurance that dawn comes after night, and spring after the winter.

Volunteers Outdo Themselves at Seventh Annual Weeks Bay Area River Cleanup

Trash carelessly tossed into a creek or over a bridge crossing is a big problem impacting the environment in Baldwin County. Debris discarded in such a reckless way contributes toxins to the water, fouls wildlife habitat and is an eyesore on an otherwise beautiful waterscape. To remedy the problem in the Weeks Bay watershed, 80 area residents



Volunteers fill the dumpster with old appliances and tires discarded over bridge crossings in the Weeks Bay watershed.

turned out Saturday, May 17th to remove trash from area waterways at the 2003 Weeks Bay Area River Cleanup. This was the seventh year of the event sponsored by the **Weeks Bay Watershed Project** and its **Citizens Advisory Committee**, the **Weeks Bay Reserve**, the **Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources-State Lands, Coastal Section**, the **Baldwin County Soil and Water Conservation District**, and also supported by several local businesses.

Over 3,900 pounds of trash were removed from our sensitive aquatic ecosystem that includes the estuary in and around Weeks Bay and the upland, freshwater streams that feed it. Special recognition goes to the

Laurendines of Magnolia Springs, who collected nearly 700 pounds of trash, and the **Tuttle and Budlong Families** of Fairhope, who joined forces to remove 1,365 pounds of debris from Cowpen Creek at the County Road 33 bridge.

Many participants took to the Fish and Magnolia Rivers and their tributaries by boat, kayak and canoe. A swift southerly wind made for a rough ride or paddle but did not slow the collection of derelict crab traps, wood, plastic waste, discarded tires, two large inner tubes and other trash. Construction materials resulted in the greatest percentage of the debris collected on the water. A disturbing trend in the type of debris recovered is the rise in computer trash. Computers



This full dumpster is testimony to the success of the 2003 Weeks Bay Area River Cleanup held May 17, 2003



Volunteers unload soggy plywood collected in Weeks Bay



Yale Budlong (center) gets help from other volunteers to offload trash that his and the Tuttle Family, both of Fairhope, collected at Cowpen Creek and County Road 33.

now become obsolete in a very short time as technology rapidly improves, and in the last three River Cleanup events, computer components have been increasingly recovered. Computer components can release toxic chemicals and metals as they sit in a creek or river and need to be disposed of properly in the county landfill or donated to groups that need or can recycle computers.

Besides the T-shirts and lunch awarded to all volunteers, **David and Linda Wilson** of Loxley were victorious in their chance to win a tandem kayak donated in part by **Schlinkert Sports Associates** in Lillian. Other support was provided by **Abita Springs**, the **Alabama Water Watch Association**, **Baldwin County Solid Waste Department**, **Bienville Water from MAWSS**, **Cliff Stapleton Catering**, **Lakewood Country Club**, **Manley Sod Farm**, **Radcliff/Economy Marine**, **Wal-Mart (Daphne)**, the **Weeks Bay Foundation**, and **Weeks Bay Water Watch**.

The Weeks Bay Area River Cleanup is part of National River Cleanup Weeks sponsored by America Outdoors®.

Baldwin County's Own "Giving Tree"

Any reader of **Shel Silverstein's** "children's" book, *The Giving Tree*, will be more than captured by a similar story that is Baldwin County's own, and the Weeks Bay Reserve Education Coordinator **Margaret Sedlecky's** role in it.

This past spring and summer, one of Baldwin County's oldest, largest and most beloved trees provided the basis for a number of classes, sessions and workshops for students and teachers made possible by a number of public and private partners including the **Baldwin County Commission, Baldwin EMC, the Alabama Forestry Association, Auburn University's College of Forestry** and the **Weeks Bay Reserve**.



The story of Inspiration Oak became big news more than a decade ago in October of 1990 when the enormous, historic tree was girdled with a chain saw. Just after the tree was vandalized, the Baldwin County Commission started proceedings to acquire the 2.8-acre site in order to allow volunteers to try and save the wounded tree and to create a public park. In spite of valiant efforts to save it, the tree died. Baldwin County purchased the property and in March of 1991 opened Inspiration Oak Park to the public. For several years thereafter the tree was visited by thousands of people from all over the United States and the world. In 2000 the park was closed due to concerns that the limbs of the tree would fall and injure visitors.

In April of 2002, Margaret Sedlecky, Education Coordinator at the Reserve, ap-

proached the Baldwin County Commission about an educational project that would have the oak as its centerpiece. The plan was launched to cut the oak tree into large cross-sections, or "tree cookies," and distribute the cookies to the schools in the County for scientific and historical instruction. In addition, the largest cookies from the tree would be displayed in the Baldwin County Courthouses and the County Commission Building for the public to view. In this way Inspiration Oak could be preserved and continue to be a legacy for future generations in Baldwin County.

The County Commission agreed to the plan, provided a responsible party could be confirmed with the equipment to do the job. The Baldwin County Electric Membership Cooperative (EMC) was contacted and agreed to cut the tree at no cost to the County. After their purchase of a 6-foot-long chain saw large enough to accomplish the task, the cutting began on May 6, 2003, in order for the tree cookies to be delivered to the schools before summer break. The **Baldwin County Parks Department** delivered tree cookies to 44 schools in the County.



Chris Erwin with the Alabama Forestry Association conducted two Project Learning Tree (PLT) Workshops June 3 and 4 at Weeks Bay Reserve, and Margaret Sedlecky conducted a session on tree cookies June 5 at the Science Potpourri Workshop held at Robertsdale High School. Each school that had received a tree cookie was asked to send at least one teacher to a workshop to receive training and materials on student instruction in science and history, with the **Baldwin County Board of Education** and **Project Learning Tree** providing materials for the 50 teachers who attended. Auburn University's College of Forestry professors will do the dendrochronology of the tree cookies from the trunk to determine the age of the tree.

The story of *The Giving Tree* is a touching account of the resiliency of nature and how she continues to openly and generously share her many and varied gifts with us despite our repeated assaults (no doubt why she has come to be known as "mother" nature). The story of Inspiration Oak, still unfolding, continues to reveal this lesson. The Baldwin County Commission will discuss future plans for Inspiration Oak Park in its next work session.



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Suggestions and comments from readers on future topics of interest are welcome. If you know of others who would be interested in receiving this newsletter, call the Foundation at 990-5004. *The Pelican Post* is produced quarterly by The Bellwether Group, Mary Mullins, Partner. Funds for the publication are provided by members of the Weeks Bay Reserve Foundation.



JOIN US!

Weeks Bay Reserve Foundation

Weeks Bay Reserve Foundation is a non-profit organization whose members provide assistance and support to the Weeks Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve's goals and programs.

As a member, you will be joining a group of people with similar interests and concerns for natural resources. You can become directly involved with the Reserve's research and educational programs by volunteering to help with field trips, seminars, cultural events, newsletters, and special projects.

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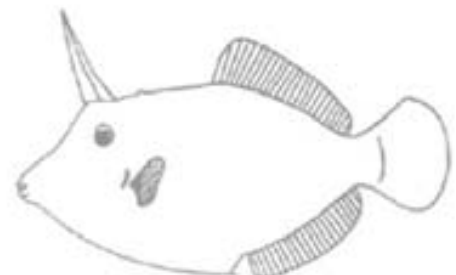
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